

High Seas Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Fisheries

Fishing gear type: Longline, gillnet, trawl, handline/pole and line, troll, and multipurpose vessels.

Current category: Category I- Longline; Category II- gillnet, trawl, handline/pole and line, troll, multipurpose vessels.*

Basis for current classification on the LOF:

The longline component of this high seas fishery is classified as a Category I because it is an extension of the Category I “Atlantic Ocean, Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico large pelagics longline fishery” operating within U.S. waters, and is not a separate fishery. The gear used, fishing methods, and target species are the same, and longline vessels targeting Atlantic HMS regularly cross into the high seas, and back, when fishing.

The gillnet, trawl, handline/pole and line, and troll components of this high seas fishery are classified as Category II due to the lack of specific information on marine mammal abundance and interactions with fisheries on the high seas.

Current list of marine mammal species/stocks injured/killed:

Longline component[†]: Atlantic spotted dolphin, Western North Atlantic (WNA); Bottlenose dolphin, Northern Gulf of Mexico oceanic; Bottlenose dolphin, WNA offshore; Common dolphin, WNA; Cuvier’s beaked whale, WNA; Long-finned pilot whale, WNA; Mesoplodon beaked whale, WNA; Risso’s dolphin, WNA; Short-finned pilot whale, WNA.

Drift gillnet component[‡]: Atlantic spotted dolphin, WNA.

Trawl[§]: Undetermined.

Handline/pole and line/Pole and line: Undetermined.

Troll: Undetermined.

Multipurpose vessels: Undetermined.

Estimated number of current participants^{**}: Longline component- 77; Drift gillnet component- 1; Trawl- 3; Handline/pole and line- 2; Troll- 7; Multipurpose vessels- 1.

Take Reduction Teams/Plans that affect this fishery: Longline gear used in this fishery is subject to the Pelagic Longline Take Reduction Plan (PLTRP) regulations (50 CFR 229.36). Gillnet gear used in this fishery is subject to the Bottlenose Dolphin Take Reduction Plan (BDTRP) regulations (50 CFR 229.35), for coastal gillnetting only (i.e., within the EEZ only), and the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan (ALWTRP) regulations (50 CFR 229.32).

Year added to the LOF: 2009

* The purse seine component of this fishery is listed as a Category III because it is an extension of the Category III “U.S. Atlantic tuna purse seine fishery” operating in U.S. waters, and is not a separate fishery.

† The observer program for the Category I pelagic longline fishery operating in U.S. waters extends into the high seas, so information is available on which marine mammal stocks are incidentally taken by this fishery on the high seas.

‡ The drift gillnet component of this high seas fishery is partially an extension of the Category II “Southeastern U.S. Atlantic shark gillnet” operating within U.S. waters. Therefore, the list of marine mammal species/stocks killed/injured in this fishery is identical to the list of those injured/killed in the U.S. waters component of the fishery, minus coastal stocks, because these marine mammal species/stocks are also found on the high seas and the fishery remains the same on both sides of the Exclusive Economic Zone boundary. Therefore, the high seas components of these fisheries pose the same risk to marine mammals as the fisheries operating in U.S. waters.

§ **Error! Main Document Only.** Trawl gear is not authorized under the Atlantic HMS Fishery Management Plan. Because High Seas Fishery Compliance Act (HSFCA) permits are valid for five years, permits obtained in past years exist in the HSFCA permit database for trawl gear. Therefore, while HSFCA permits exist for trawl gear, it does not represent effort. In order to land fish species, fishers must be using an authorized gear type. Once these permits for unauthorized trawl gear expire, the permit-holder will be required to obtain a permit for an authorized gear type.

** The number of vessels and participants operating in the Atlantic HMS High Seas fishery do not necessarily represent additional fishers than those accounted for in fisheries operating within U.S. waters. Many fishers holding Atlantic HMS high seas fishing permits also fish within U.S. waters and are included in the numbers of estimated vessels and participants operating within those fisheries. The number of participants listed represents only the number of permits for the high seas component of the fishery.

Category when originally listed: Category I- Longline; Category II- gillnet, trawl, handline/pole and line, troll, multipurpose vessels.

Basis for original classification on the LOF:

The longline component of this high seas fishery was classified as a Category I because it is an extension of the Category I “Atlantic Ocean, Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico large pelagics longline fishery” operating within U.S. waters, and is not a separate fishery. The gear used, fishing methods, and target species are the same, and longline vessels targeting Atlantic HMS regularly cross into the high seas, and back, when fishing.

The gillnet, trawl, handline/pole and line, and troll components of this high seas fishery were classified as Category II due to the lack of specific information on marine mammal abundance and marine mammal-fishery interactions on the high seas. Category II is the appropriate classification for new fisheries on the LOF for which there is little information on which to base a classification.

Estimated number of participants when originally listed: Longline component- 75; Drift gillnet component- 1; Trawl- 3; Handline/pole and line/Pole and line- 2; Troll- 5; Multipurpose vessels- 1.

Past names, if any: None.

Gear description/method for fishing: The high seas Atlantic Highly Migratory Species fisheries are similar to fisheries targeting Atlantic HMS within U.S. waters, but primarily use pelagic longline gear. Within U.S. waters, HMS commercial fishers use several gear types. Authorized gear for tuna include spear gun (except when targeting bluefin), rod and reel, handline/pole and lines, bandit gear, harpoon, pelagic longline, trap (pound net and fish weir), and purse seine. Purse seines used to target bluefin tuna must have a mesh size of less than or equal to 4.5 in (11.4 cm) and at least 24-count thread throughout the net. Only rod and reel gear may be used to target billfish and commercial possession of Atlantic billfish is prohibited. Authorized gear for sharks includes rod and reel, handline/pole and line, bandit gear, longline, and gillnet. Gillnets must be less than or equal to 2.5 km (1.6 mi) in length. Authorized gear for swordfish includes handline/pole and line, handgear (including buoy gear), and longline for north Atlantic swordfish, and longline for south Atlantic swordfish. North Atlantic swordfish incidentally taken in squid trawls may be retained.

Target species: Atlantic swordfish and bigeye tuna are the primary target species on the high seas, with Atlantic yellowfin, albacore and skipjack tunas, and pelagic and some deepwater sharks also caught and retained for sale. Bluefin tuna are caught incidental to pelagic longline operations, both on the high seas and within U.S. waters, and may be retained subject to specific target catch requirements.

Spatial/temporal distribution of effort: The fishery management area for Atlantic HMS includes U.S. waters and the adjacent high seas. The high seas components of Atlantic HMS fisheries are extensions of various Category I, II, and III fisheries operating in U.S. waters.

Levels of observer coverage each year: Observer coverage for the Category I “Atlantic Ocean, Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico large pelagics longline fishery” operating in U.S. waters (between 4%-15% from 2000-2008, depending on the geographic location ^{††}) extends into the high seas. Observer data are not available for the Category II Atlantic HMS high seas fisheries.

Management and regulations:

Atlantic HMS are managed under regulations implementing the Consolidated Atlantic HMS Fishery Management Plan (2006), under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) and the Atlantic Tunas Convention Act (ATCA). Regulations issued under the MSA address the target fish species, as well as bycatch of species protected by the Endangered Species Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, and Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The MSA regulations (50 CFR 635) require vessel owners and operators targeting

^{††} Observer coverage levels include the latest information reported in the most current final Stock Assessment Report (SAR).

Atlantic HMS with longline or gillnet gear to complete protected species safe handling, release, and identification workshops. The regulations also require shark dealers to complete an Atlantic shark identification workshop.

Longline gear targeting Atlantic HMS is subject to regulations under the PLTRP (50 CFR 229.36). Gillnet gear is subject to regulations under the BDTRP (50 CFR 229.35), for coastal gillnetting only (i.e., within the EEZ only), and the ALWTRP (50 CFR 229.32).

History of Changes on the LOF

2011 LOF:

- Longline: Estimated number of participants was updated from 72 to 77.
- Trawl: Estimated number of participants was updated from 2 to 3.
- Handline/pole and line: Estimated number of participants was updated from 11 to 2.

2010 LOF:

- Longline:
 - Removed pygmy sperm whale (WNA) from the list of species/stocks killed/injured in this fishery. This fishery is an extension of the fishery operating in U.S. waters (and is not a separate fishery), in which there have been no observed interactions in the past 5 years.
 - Estimated number of participants was updated from 75 to 72.
- Trawl: Estimated number of participants was updated from 3 to 2.
- Handline/pole and line: Estimated number of participants was updated from 2 to 11.
- Troll: Estimated number of participants was updated from 5 to 7.